

November 9, 2003

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Commandant of the United States Coast Guard
2100 Second Street SW
Washington, DC 20593

Dear Admiral Collins:

I want to take the opportunity to thank you again for the superb job the Coast Guard has done responding to the new missions that have been placed on it since September 11, 2001. I recently attended the inauguration of the new Port Security and Maritime Safety team for the Port of New York and New Jersey and was very impressed.

I am writing to you to bring to your attention allegations that have been made to me concerning the safety of the New York Passenger Ship Terminal. As I am sure you are aware, the New York Passenger ship Terminal, located on the Hudson River in Midtown Manhattan, handles over 900,000 passengers a year and is the busiest passenger ship terminal outside the state of Florida. Given its size, location, and the number of passengers traveling through it every year, I believe that security should be the paramount concern for the operators of this facility.

However, it has recently come to my attention that this may not be the case. The Passenger Ship Terminal is currently operated by P + O Ports under a contract from the owner of the facility, the New York City Economic Development Corp. Recently, reports have surfaced claiming that P + O is not taking the steps necessary to insure that this facility is operated in the safest manner possible. Some of the issues raised include unscreened baggage being stored under the terminal for long periods of time, inadequate protection of docked ships from attacks by small boats such as the type used in the USS Cole bombing, potential car bombing scenarios given the location of the parking facilities next to the docked ships, and inadequate training of security personnel.

P + O claims that they are in compliance with all applicable Coast Guard regulations. Despite this, there appear to continue to be serious safety considerations at the terminal. Therefore I am asking you to investigate this matter to insure that this facility is being operated in safest manner possible. If there is any way that my office can assist in the matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Charles Schumer
United States Senator